STARBLAZER

FANTASY FICTION IN PICTURES No. 274

35p

SKALD

— THE ULTIMATE CONFLICT

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DON'T MISS
THIS MONTH'S OTHER
ACTION-PACKED
ADVENTURE
STARBLAZER
35p
SUPER WIMP
NOW ON SALE

SKALD —THE ULTIMATE CONFLICT

THE STORM ABATED SUDDENLY —
A WILD FURY, BUT THE STORM DIDN'T LAST LONG, CROOKHORN. NOW WE CAN GO ON AFTER THOSE STRAYS FROM THE HERD.

THEY MOVED ON — A SHORT WAY.
WHY DO YOU STOP? WHAT IS IT THAT CAUSES YOU THIS TREMBLING?

SOMETHING IS HERE BEFORE US — SOMETHING I CANNOT SEE. I HAVE THIS CHILLED FEELING AS I MOVE CLOSER.
AAARGH!
SKALD WAS STRUCK BY INVISIBLE VIOLENCE.
ARHHH — A COLD NOTHINGNESS THAT STRIKES THROUGH TO THE MARROW OF MY BONES.

LAUGHTER REACHED THE HERDER AS HIS FALL WAS CHECKED.
A MANLIKE CREATURE CLAD IN IRON AND AFLOAT LIKE A FEATHER IN THE AIR.

NOW HE FLIES LIKE A BIRD. CAN IT BE A WARLOCK LORD RETURNED WITH HIS TRICKERY?
SKALD RESUMED HIS PURPOSE.
WE MUST FIND THOSE STRAYS BEFORE THEY ARE FOUND BY A HUNGRY PREDATOR.

THUNDER — ANOTHER STORM! NO, THAT IS DRY DUST I SEE SWIRLING.
THE STRAYED BUNCH! THEY STAMPEDE.
RUN, CROOKHORN — RUN! YOUR FOOLISH CHILDREN RACE TO THE RIMROCK.

BACK! GO BACK!
HEY-YAAAAAAAAH!
TOO LATE!

THE STRAYS WENT OVER THE RIM.
ALL PERISHED — BUT WHY? WHAT COULD HAVE CAUSED THEM TO GALLOP TO THEIR DEATHS?

SKALD SAW AGAIN A CHILLING SIGHT.
HE — OR IT! THAT SAME FLYING VISITATION.

HE CASTS FIRE!
QUICKLY, CROOKHORN — INTO SHELTER.

NIGHT OVERTOOK SKALD ON HIS RETURN TO THE GREAT HERD.
AYE, I HEAR THE SAME, OLD FRIEND. COME TO MY FIRE, LINX, WARRIOR WOMAN OF THE YABA-KEL.
DEATH'S-BREATH, BUT YOU ARE HARD TO SURPRISE, HERDER.
HE FLIES AWAY. I LIKE NOT THIS FLAME-CASTING JESTER OF THE AIR.
I KNOW THE SOUND OF YOUR FOOTFALL AND THE LOOK OF YOUR TRACKS SEEN THIS DAY AMONG THOSE OF A PARTY OF YOUR KIND.

CHARRED MEAT! YOUR COOKING DOES NOT IMPROVE.
IT SUITS ME! NOW SIT AND I WILL TALK OF A METAL MAN WHO THROWS FIRE AND FLIES LIKE A BIRD.
I AM IN NO MOOD FOR WARLOCK TALES. HERDER, I HAVE DECIDED THE TIME IS RIGHT FOR ME TO HONOUR A MANPERSON BY TAKING HIM AS HUSBAND.
I AM SURE YOU WILL CHOOSE WISELY ONE SKILLED IN DOMESTIC DUTIES.
NO, THE CHOSEN ONE IS SADLY LACKING IN SUCH MANLY ABILITY — YET HE CAN LEARN.
HUH!

SKALD WAS DEFTLY TRUSSED.
WARRIOR WOMAN, A WORD FROM ME AND CROOKHORN WILL STAMP YOU INTO THE EARTH.
YOU WILL NOT SAY THAT WORD. IT IS A MANLY WEAKNESS IN YOU WHICH APPEALS TO ME.
YOU WILL HAVE A GOOD LIFE. I AM A FINE PROVIDER AND YOU ENJOY GOSSIPING WITH THE OTHER MENFOLK ABOUT THE VILLAGE.
URGH! MUCH MORE OF THIS AND CROOKHORN WILL GET THE WORD TO COMMENCE STAMPING.
DAY CAME.
WHAT IS MORE, I AM LAZY. THE HOUSE WILL BE A MESS.
A REGULAR BEATING WITH A STICK WILL SOON CURE YOU OF THAT. HULLO! THOSE CARRION BIRDS HAVE FOUND A MEAL.

THE VEROD — A TRIBE OF UNMANLY MANPERSONS WHO THINK OF THEMSELVES AS WARRIORS. THIS COULD BE FROM AN ENCOUNTER WITH MY OWN HUNTING PARTY.

I SEE NO WOUNDS, NO MARKS OF HOW DEATH CAME TO THESE VEROD. PERHAPS YOUR WARRIORESS FRIENDS TALKED THEM TO DEATH.
SUCH IMPERTINENCE COULD EARN YOU A BEATING. HUM! IT IS INDEED ODD.

THEY TRAVELLED ON INTO THE DAY.
RIDER APPROACHES!
A LOOKOUT WHO WATCHES OVER OUR CAMP. HERDER, DO TRY TO BEHAVE AND NOT DISGRACE ME.

THEY CAME AMONG A YABA-KEL HUNTING PARTY.

CAPTAIN, ALLOW ME TO INTRODUCE MY BETROTHED.

SO THIS IS WHY YOU SLIPPED AWAY. LET'S HAVE A CLOSER LOOK AT THAT LUCKY FELLOW.

IMPUDENT SLUT!
ARHHH!

YOU ARE IN LUCK, SKINNY ONE. I'VE ALREADY TWO OTHER HUSBANDS TO DO THE HEAVY WORK WHILE YOU AMUSE ME.
LATER—
I HAVE PERMISSION TO FEED YOU. JUST SIMPLE FARE AS WE HAVE NO MAN ALONG TO DO THE COOKING.
LOOKS AS IF I WILL HAVE TO GIVE THAT WORD TO CROOKHORN.
GIVE NO SIGN OF WHAT I AM DOING. THAT OLD BAT SHALL NOT HAVE YOU.
OH, I DON'T THINK SHE'D KEEP ME FOR LONG AFTER A TASTE OF MY COOKING.

LINX RETURNED TO THE FIRE.
TWO BETROTHALS AND A FIRM OFFER OF BEING A SENIOR HUSBAND. A PITY I'M NOT YET READY TO SETTLE DOWN.
RUN, CROOKHORN —RUN.
THE MANPERSON ESCAPES.
SLUT! THAT IS YOUR DOING.
ONLY TO SPARE YOU THE SHAME OF TAKING GAME SNARED BY ANOTHER, CAPTAIN. NOW YOU CAN DO YOUR OWN HUNTING.

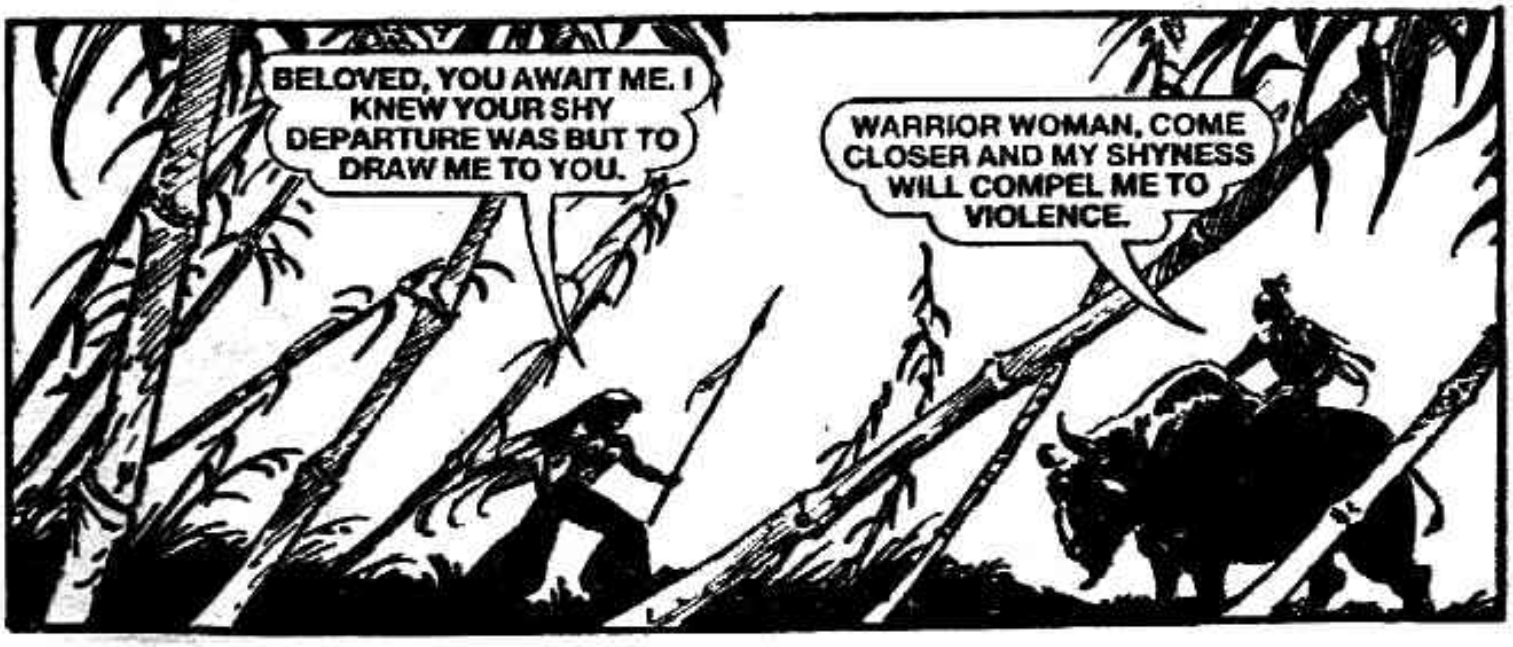
I'LL HUNT HIM AND CATCH HIM — AND THEN I SHALL DEAL WITH YOU. GIRLS, BIND HER FAST AND AWAIT MY RETURN.

THEY FOLLOW US, CROOKHORN. THREE WARRIOR WOMEN. SHOW THEM SOME SPEED, OLD FRIEND.

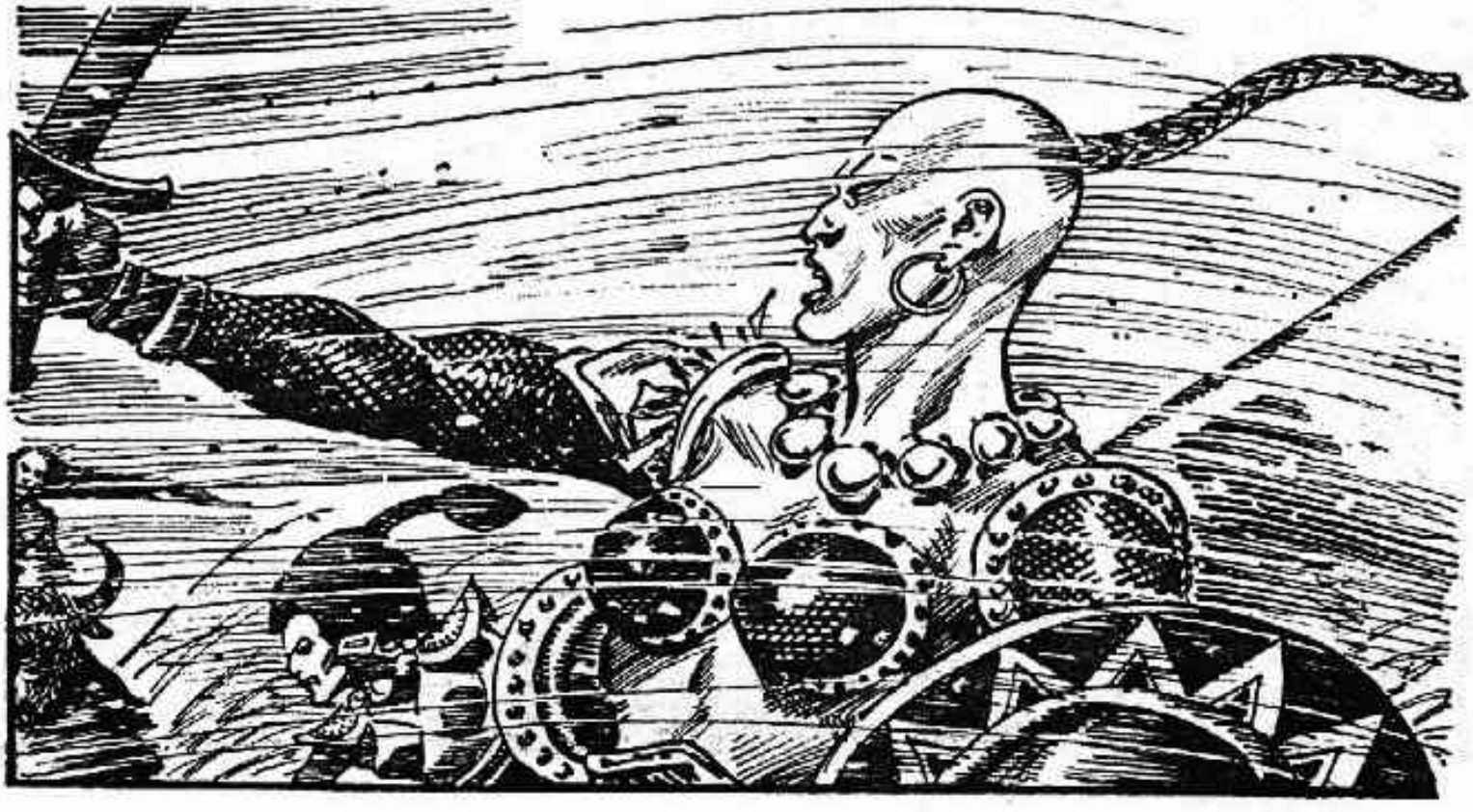
STEP LIVELY, GIRLS. MY BELOVED MAY OUTRACE US, BUT WE'LL RUN HIM DOWN IN THE END.
SKALD CAME ON ANOTHER PART OF THE GREAT HERD AT THE WATER.
YOUR FAMILY BECOMES SCATTERED. TIME WE MOVED THEM ON TO BETTER GRAZING.

STILL THEY PURSUE ME. BETTER PERHAPS TO FACE THEM NOW THAN TO LEAVE SUCH HAZARD ON OUR BACKTRACKS.

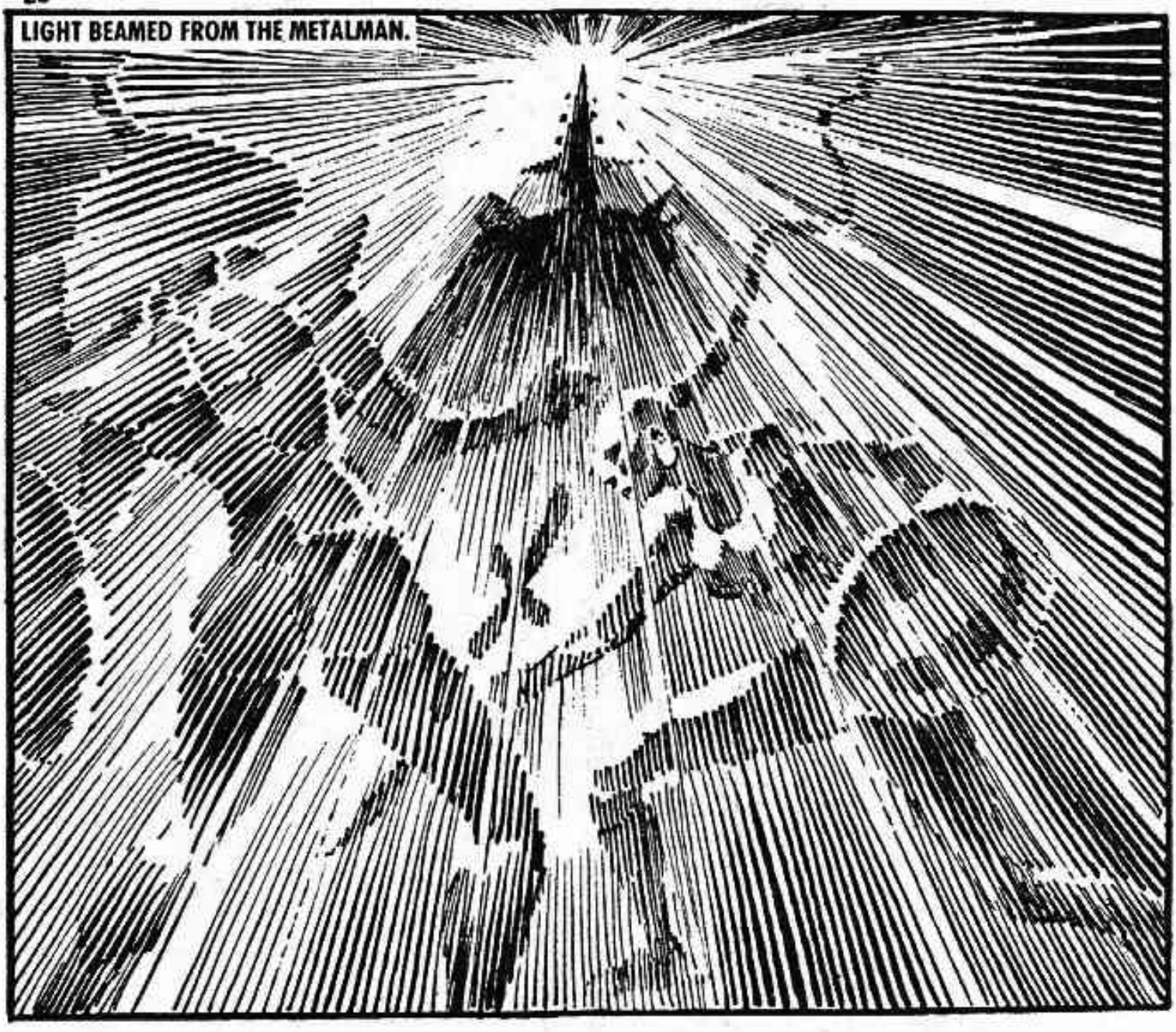
THE PURSUIT NEARED THE WATERHOLE.
ASIDE! MAKE WAY!


BELOVED, YOU AWAIT ME. I KNEW YOUR SHY DEPARTURE WAS BUT TO DRAW ME TO YOU.
WARRIOR WOMAN, COME CLOSER AND MY SHYNESS WILL COMPEL ME TO VIOLENCE.

WHICH WAS WHEN THE WIND BLEW.



. . . AND BLEW OUT. SUDDENLY THERE WAS ANOTHER PRESENCE.
IT IS HE! THE IRON BEING THAT FLIES.
CLOSE IN, GIRLS. SUCH GAME LOOKS WORTH TAKING OFF A LITTLE TIME FROM MY COURTING.

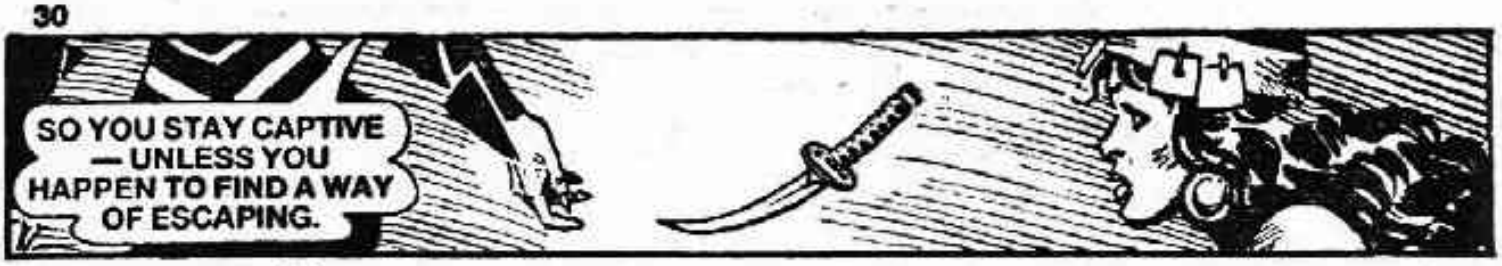

LIGHT BEAMED FROM THE METALMAN.

PERISH YOU— HAYEEEEE!

THE LIGHT CAME AGAIN.
WARLOCK WIZARDRY!
NOW HE TURNS ON ME.
SKALD LEAPED FROM THE BACK OF CROOKHORN.
HE CASTS FIRE AGAIN.

THE WATER GROWS HOT.
SKALD CAME UP AMONG REEDS.
AH — HE LOSES INTEREST IN ME. HE PICKS UP THE WOMAN CAPTAIN.

HE FLIES — AND HE TAKES HER WITH HIM.
NIGHT SETTLED ON THE YABA-KEL HUNTING CAMP.
DEAR LINX, WE MUST OBEY OUR CAPTAIN AND HOLD YOU BOUND AS SHE COMMANDED — YET NONE OF US WISH TO HAVE YOU FOR AN ENEMY.
EVIL WIZARDRY, CROOKHORN — BUT NOT OUR CONCERN WHILE WE HAVE THIS BUNCH TO MOVE TO FRESH GRAZING!
VERY WISE.



SHORTLY AFTERWARDS—

SISTERS, I DO BELIEVE THE CAPTAIN'S CAPTIVE IS ESCAPING.

THAT IS TERRIBLE, WE MUST DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT FIRST THING IN THE MORNING.

THE NEW DAY FOUND SKALD MOVING CATTLE.
A ROCKSLIDE SINCE LAST WE CAME THROUGH HERE. I NEED TO SEE IF IT CAN BE CROSSED BY YOU AND YOUR CHILDREN.

YOU WARN ME, OLD FRIEND. YOU SCENT DANGER.
LOOPS OF RAWHIDE LINE SETTLED ABOUT SKALD.
A TRAP!

VEROD WARRIORS.

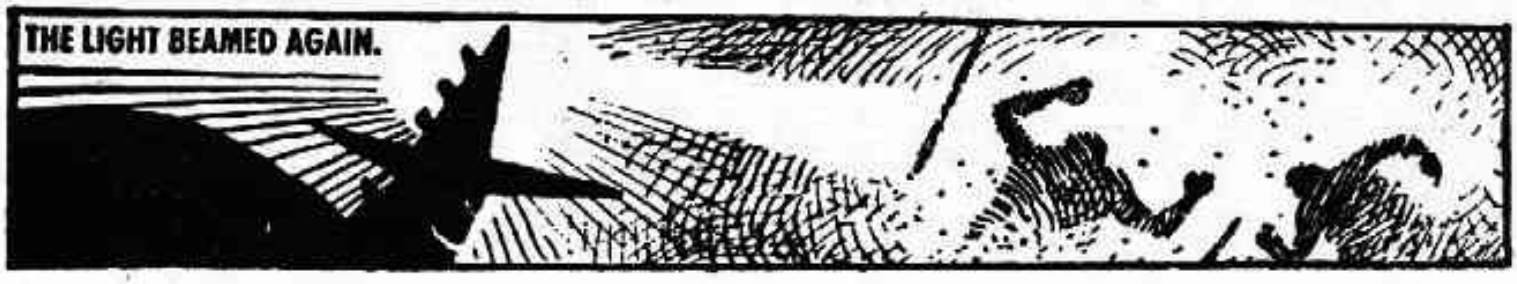
HERDER, YOUR TRACKS AND THOSE OF YOUR GREAT BEAST WERE AMONG THE DEAD OF MY BROTHER'S HUNTING PARTY. I ASK YOU WHO SLEW THEM AND WHAT HAS BECOME OF MY BROTHER?
VEROD CHIEF, I WILLINGLY TELL YOU WHAT I KNOW.
SKALD TOLD.
A BEING IN IRON WHO KILLS WITHOUT WOUNDING AND FLIES LIKE A BIRD. HERDER, YOU TELL A WONDROUS STORY.

A WONDROUS LYING STORY — BUT WE SHALL GET THE TRUTH FROM YOU.
SKALD WAS TAKEN PRISONER TO THE VEROID CAMP.
LET HIM FEEL THE WARMTH OF OUR REGARD.

NEXT TIME YOU WILL BE BETTER CHARRED AS THE FIRE HEAT BUILDS.
I TOLD YOU THE TRUTH.
SWING HIM AGAIN.
CHIEF, LOOK BEYOND YOU. SEE WHAT WE SEE.

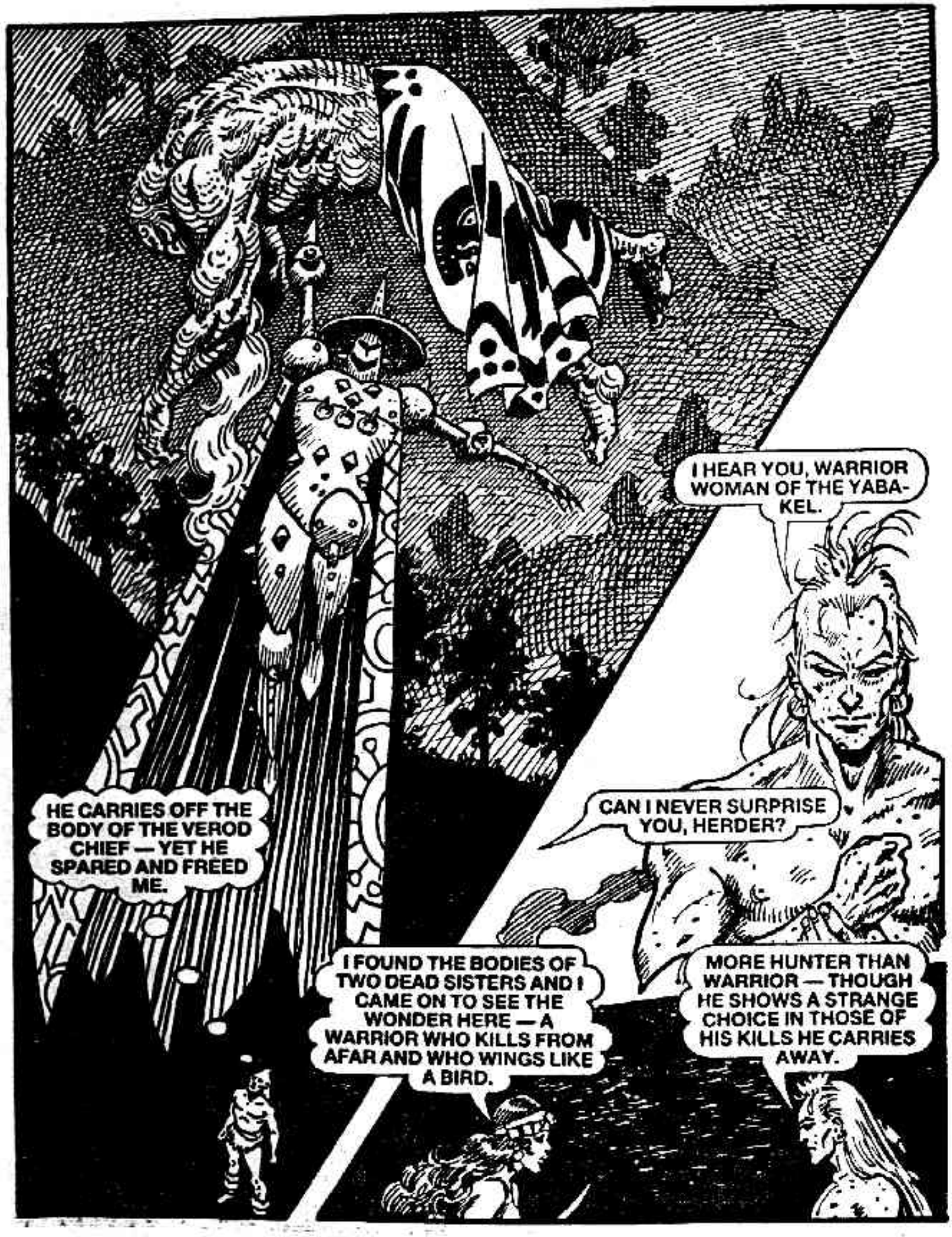
IT IS HE — THE BEING IN IRON. IT WAS HE WHO SLEW YOUR KIND.
NOW I BELIEVE THE HERDER'S STORY.
HAYEE! WHAT STRANGE FORCE SURROUNDS THIS CREATURE?

A FLARE OF LIGHT ENVELOPED THE VEROD CHIEF.


THE LIGHT BEAMED AGAIN.

. . . AND AGAIN.
THE VEROD ARE SLAIN. NOW THE METALMAN COMES TO ME.
THE WIZARDRY THROWS FIRE. SO THIS IS HOW I PERISH.

SKALD CLOSED HIS EYES.


I HEAR YOU, WARRIOR WOMAN OF THE YABA-KEL.
HE CARRIES OFF THE BODY OF THE VEROD CHIEF — YET HE SPARED AND FREED ME.
CAN I NEVER SURPRISE YOU, HERDER?
I FOUND THE BODIES OF TWO DEAD SISTERS AND I CAME ON TO SEE THE WONDER HERE — A WARRIOR WHO KILLS FROM AFAR AND WHO WINGS LIKE A BIRD.
MORE HUNTER THAN WARRIOR — THOUGH HE SHOWS A STRANGE CHOICE IN THOSE OF HIS KILLS HE CARRIES AWAY.

CROOKHORN! SO YOU FOUND YOUR OWN WAY TO ME, OLD FRIEND.
HERDER, I KNOW YOU WOULD HAVE ME STAY TO PROTECT YOU, BUT I MUST AVENGE MY SISTERS — YET HOW DOES ONE HUNT SUCH A HUNTER?
THEN I GO!
FIND HIS CAMP — WHICH IS BEHIND A WALL OF COLD FIRE OVER THE LAVABEDS FROM WHERE YOU FOUND ME THAT OTHER NIGHT.
SKALD RODE OFF ON CROOKHORN— A DIFFERENT WAY.
CARRION BIRDS! WHAT NEW DEATH IS THIS?

YOUR CHILDREN, CROOKHORN — SLAIN WITHOUT MARK IN THE MANNER OF THAT FLYING HUNTER.

SKALD TURNED BACK, AND AT NOON THE NEXT DAY.

NOT FAR NOW TO THE WALL OF COLD FIRE.

SKALD LOOKED DOWN ON TWO FIGURES IN CONFRONTATION.
IRON DOG! I WILL TEACH YOU TO LAUGH AT LINX OF THE YABA-KEL.
SLAY THE HUNTER! RUN HIM DOWN!

THE HUNTER TOOK TO THE AIR.

HOW DARE YOU INTERRUPT ME AT MY WORK?
SHUT UP, WOMAN!
AAHH!
LINX IS HARMED.

SENSELESS YET LIVING. I MUST PUT HER IN HIDING.
HIDING LINX, SKALD PREPARED TO DO BATTLE—
THERE HE IS! MY SLING IS PUNY AGAINST SUCH WEAPONS, BUT IT IS ALL I HAVE.
SKALD CAST A STONE.
DONG!

I HAVE HIS ATTENTION.
CROOKHORN! HE COMES TO AID ME. OH NO — NO!
GO BACK!
TOO LATE. HE IS DESTROYED.

CROOKHORN LIVES. HE COMES TO ME.
STEADY, OLD FRIEND.
HIS EYES! THERE IS MADNESS IN THEM.

SKALD RAN FROM HIS BEAST-FRIEND.
NOW HE FLIES MERRILY AWAY AND LEAVES ME TO BE KILLED BY A FRIEND.

DO WHAT YOU MUST, OLD ONE. YOU ARE NOT TO BLAME FOR WHAT HAS TAKEN OVER YOUR MIND.
A CHANGE CAME SUDDENLY OVER CROOKHORN, THE WILD GLARE FADED FROM THE EYES OF THE GREAT BEAST.
SO THE POWER OF WHAT IS BETWEEN US IS EVEN GREATER THAN SORCERY. YET IT SHOWS THAT THIS TASK IS FOR ME ALONE.

STAY, CROOKHORN. TAKE CARE OF THE WARRIOR WOMAN.

SKALD WENT ON ALONE.
THIS IS THE SLOPE DOWN WHICH I FELL — UP THERE THE COLD FIRE.

A BARRIER OF MAGIC FORCE. I MUST FOLLOW IT TO FIND IF THERE IS AN END.

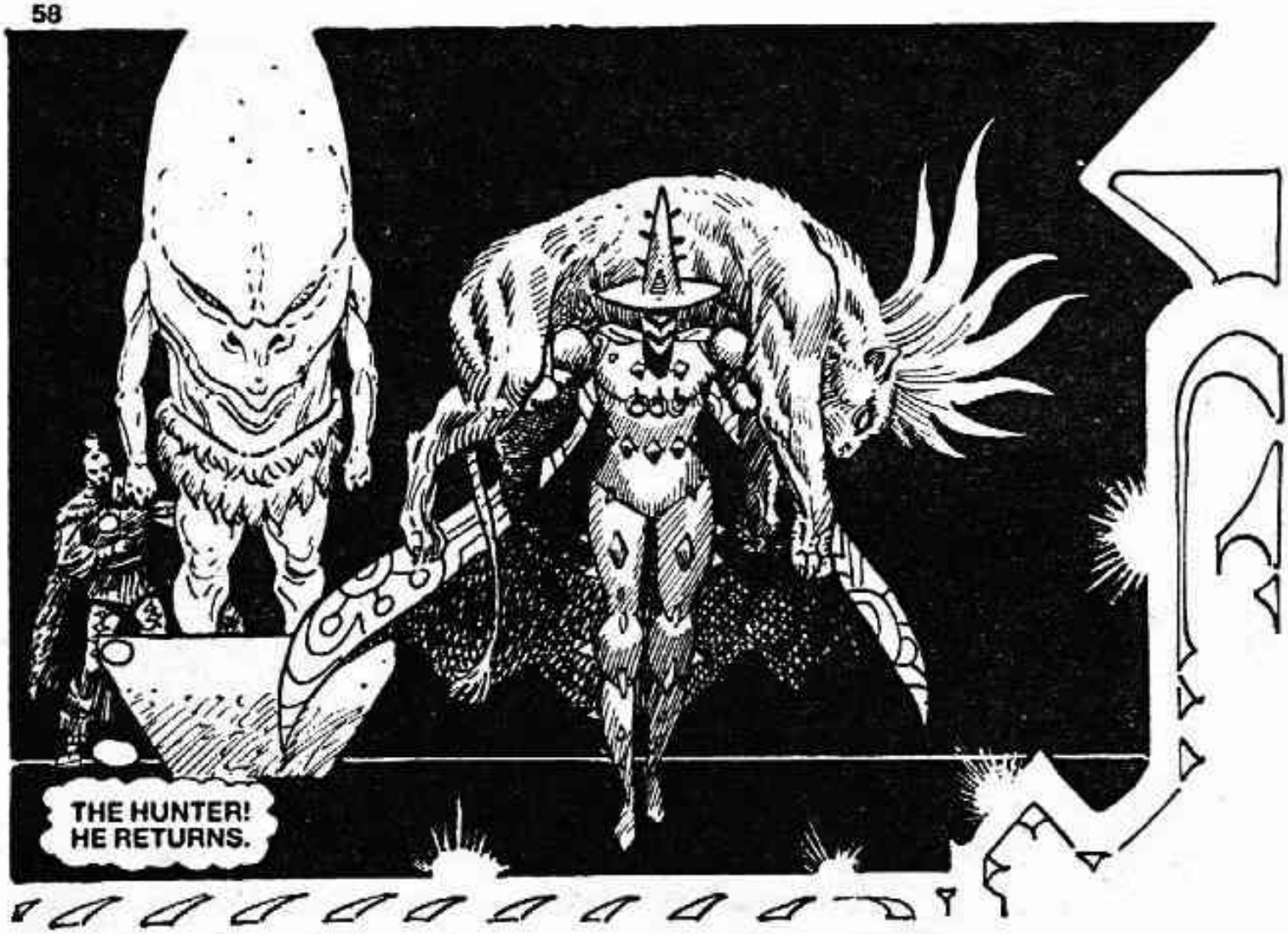
SKALD PROBED FOR A GAP IN THE STRANGE BARRIER.
NO END! IT FORMS A RING.
A WATER VRAD! IT NESTS IN THE BANK UNDER THE BARRIER.
PERHAPS I CAN GO WHERE A VRAD GOES.

AYEE! A CAVE OF IRON LIKE THAT SUPPOSED TO HAVE BROUGHT PEOPLE HERE FROM THE STARS AT THE START OF TIME.

A GATEWAY OPENS.
HAH! YOU HERE, CAPTAIN OF THE YABA-KEL!
LIFELESS — COLD AND HARD LIKE STONE. I LOSE MY CHANCE OF BECOMING SENIOR HUSBAND.

THE VEROD CHIEF AND OTHERS, PEOPLE AND ANIMALS — EVEN A BULL LIKE CROOKHORN. THOUGH WITH MORE HANDSOME HORNS.

WHAT IS THIS — AH, THAT NOISE! THE PORTAL OPENS AGAIN.


THE HUNTER! HE RETURNS.

HE BRINGS BACK A FIRE-BEAST.

THERE WAS SUDDEN MOVEMENT, NOISE AND LIGHT.

THE FIRE-BEAST HAS CHANGED. IT HAS BECOME AS THESE OTHERS.
THE FIRE-BEAST HAD BECOME LIKE A STATUE . . . FROZEN FOREVER IN A MOMENT OF TIME.

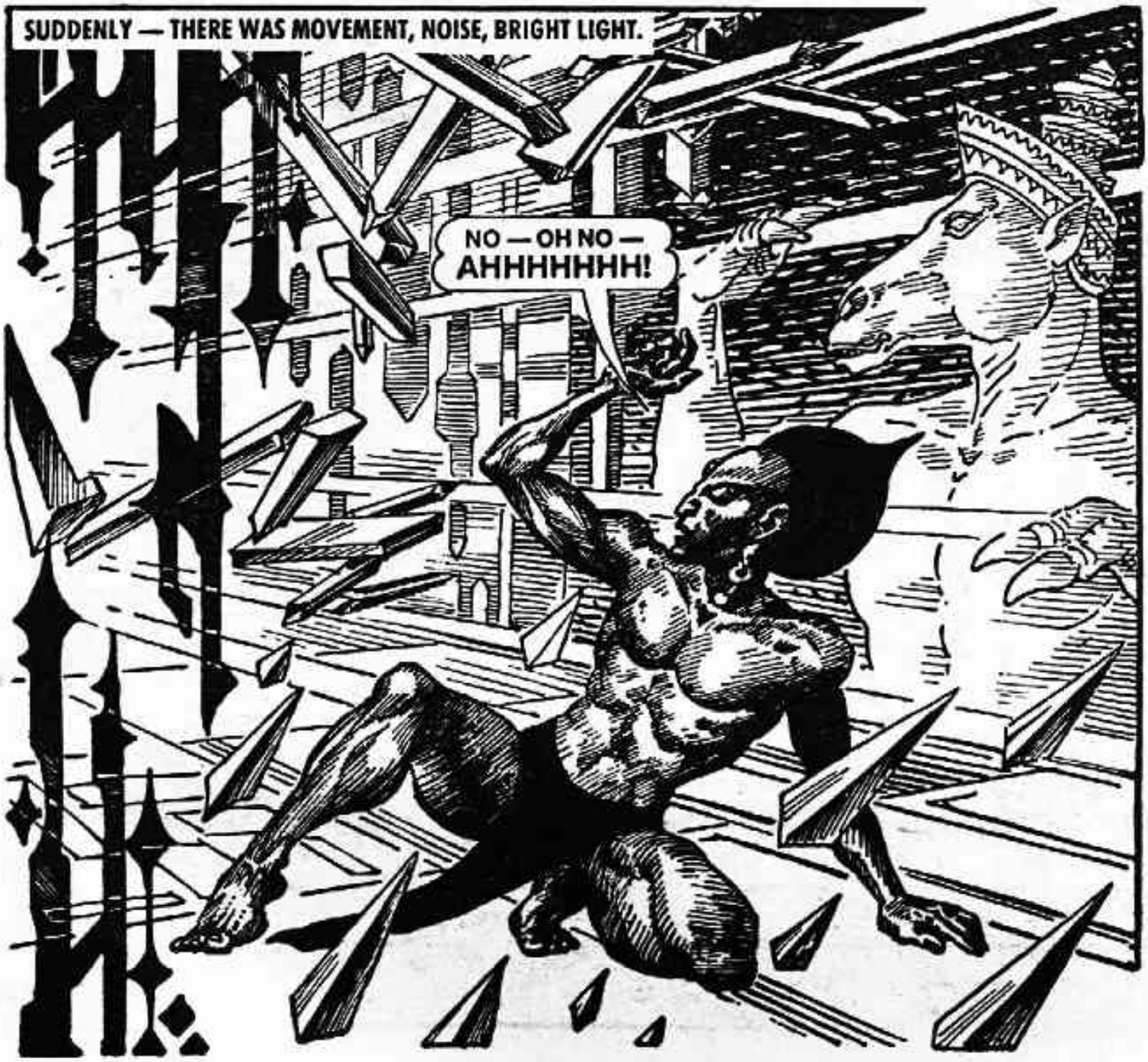
HE PLACES THE BEAST AMONG THE OTHERS.
HE TAKES OFF HIS IRON GARB.

THE HUNTER SHED HIS ARMOUR.
ONLY A MAN — AND SUCH A SMALL MAN OUT OF HIS IRON.

SKALD CLOSED IN.
AN INTRUDER! AH YES, THE YOUNG HERDER. I WOULD HAVE TAKEN YOU AND YOUR BULL HAD I NOT ALREADY OBTAINED BETTER SPECIMENS.
HE SEES ME.
YOU WONDER THAT I SPEAK YOUR TONGUE. THE ANSWER IS THAT THIS PLANET SHARES THE SAME HERITAGE AS MINE, BUT WE ADVANCED WHILE YOU RETURNED TO SAVAGERY.
SO YOU COME FROM THE STARS — BUT WHY COME TO KILL?

I HUNT FOR ENJOYMENT, HERDER — WHAT WE CALL SPORT. THE KILLING IS NECESSARY FOR TROPHIES THAT PROVE MY SKILL. I HAVE AN ALMOST COMPLETE COLLECTION OF YOUR LARGER FAUNA IF YOU WOULD CARE FOR ME TO SHOW YOU ROUND.
OH NO, STARMAN.
THE HUNTER WAS UNEXPECTEDLY QUICK — BUT SKALD WAS QUICKER.
ARGH!

YOUR HUNTING IS ENDED.
LET US TALK — UGH!


SUDDENLY — THERE WAS MOVEMENT, NOISE, BRIGHT LIGHT.
NO — OH NO — AHHHHHHH!

THE HUNTER HAD FALLEN INTO THE APPARATUS WHICH TRANSFORMED LIVING FLESH INTO STONE—

NOW HIS COLLECTION IS COMPLETE. HE HAS HIMSELF TO ADD TO IT.

SKALD FLED THE IRON CAVE.

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STARBLAZER...

THE DEFINITIVE HISTORY

Cover by Keith Robson

1984 closed with Band Aid at number one, and 1985 opened with Band Aid still at number one. Starblazer continued with its diet of space adventure interrupted only by a pair of role-playing stories — 150, Captain's Choice and 158, Axel the Avenger. These tales, although not without merit, weren't a resounding success and were discontinued.

Highlights were from the typewriters of Ray Aspden, Mike Chinn and Mike Knowles and the pens of Alcatena, O'Donnell and Saichan.

No.	TITLE	AUTHOR	ARTIST
136	TROUBLESHOOTER	ALAN ROGERS	ALAN ROGERS
137	GUARDIAN OF THE VORTEX	G. PARKER	G. SENIOR
138	THE RAID ON ROURKE'S STAR	G. P. RICE	VILA
139	ASTRAL ARMADA	R. ASPDEN	SEGURA
140	DEATHWHEEL	R. BONSALL	SANCHEZ
141	SPACEROAMER	M. CHINN	ALCATENA
142	GATEWAY TO TERROR	N. AUSTIN	T. O'DONNELL
143	NIGHTMARE FROM NAZZOS	ALAN ROGERS	ORTIZ
144	SAILFIGHTERS OF SOL 7	R. H. BONSALL	ALCATENA
145	CAVES OF CRYSTAL CARBON	R. ASPDEN	SAICHANN
146	KNIGHT OF DARKNESS	R. ASPDEN	ORTIZ
147	ATTACK FORCE X	ALAN ROGERS	SEGURA
148	THE KILLING GAME	R. H. BONSALL	VILA
149	DEADLY PILGRIMAGE	M. FURNASS	ALCATENA
150	CAPTAIN'S CHOICE	STAFF	K. ROBSON
151	EXTINCTION EARTH	ALAN ROGERS	ALAN ROGERS
152	DOOMWORLD	R. ASPDEN	T. O'DONNELL
153	THE STAR DESTROYERS	M. STALL	CICUENDEZ
154	THE SUICIDE SQUAD	W. REED	ALCATENA
155	RETURN TO DARKLAND	R. H. BONSALL	CASANOVAS SNR
156	THE SYGMA WARRIOR	M. KNOWLES	SAICHAN
157	WARWORLD	ALAN ROGERS	SEGURA
158	AXEL THE AVENGER	STAFF	K. ROBSON
159	BATTLEWORLD	R. ASPDEN	ORTIZ

SKALD

— THE ULTIMATE CONFLICT

Skald the herd was weary. Weary of the long battle against the malignant warlords which now seemed to be over. Pockets of their evil legacy still lingered in the shape of technology that few understood but many desired. Tired of all this, Skald set out on his wanderings to find his herd, aided by his faithful beast, Crookhorn. But most of all he was tired of Linx, the formidable she-warrior who dogged his steps relentlessly in the vain hope of taking him as a husband . . . a househusband, who cooked, washed and sewed. Sometimes, Skald thought, war was an altogether better prospect.